

Notes

ABC Room: Discussion Panel

Panel:

Dave Koert, *Grower, Koert Organics*

Janet Ashworth, *Chef/ Owner, County Food Co.*

Laurie Neubrand, *Grower, Neubrand Country Produce*

Fred de Martines, *Farmer, Perth Pork Products*

Neil Baxter, *Chef de Cuisine, Rundles (Stratford)*

Fred

- ❑ Customers need to know you are reliable
- ❑ Make sure you can guarantee product – NO EXCUSES.
- ❑ Fred's customers includes The Queens Inn, JK Kitchens, Drake Hotel, various Toronto butchers
- ❑ He had to “learn to speak the Chef's language” to understand what they needed/ wanted in a supplier.
- ❑ A supplier needs to be concerned for a Chef's business (price to sell).
- ❑ Get the Chefs to the farm for a tour. This can be a real eye opener and help create dialogue/ relationships.
- ❑ His animals are raised humanely (if its cold, keep them inside). People want to know that.
- ❑ He raises Tams and Birkshires because they are unique. They are raised in straw, the old fashioned way. The meat has more marbling and flavour.
- ❑ Go the extra mile and do some of your own marketing. Promote what you do (i.e. raised humanely, free range or special diet). Chefs are looking for something niche and unique.
- ❑ Be willing to deliver and work with distributors. Chefs will not be able to come to your door.
- ❑ Do not try to compete with large food conglomerates. Focus on the uniqueness of your product.
- ❑ Find your niche – feed your animals differently then other producers and promote those differences to your customers.
- ❑ Producers need to know their product inside and out in order to market it. A pig farmer should know how to butcher it, what the different cuts of meat are and what to do with it (how to cook it). You need to understand this to understand what a Chef will want.

Laurie

- ❑ Buying local is a current food trend
- ❑ Buy Local Buy Fresh map has been very successful for her, business has increased
- ❑ Find out what a restaurant needs before the season (Stratford) starts, then make sure you can supply the product

- ❑ Have a discussion with Chefs in November/ December so you can plant and source accordingly
- ❑ Communication is key! Always ask the Chefs need more product

Janet

- ❑ It takes Janet 8 to 10 hours a week to source product
- ❑ Values a trusting relationship, consistent buying
- ❑ Farmers and restaurant owners need to understand each others business
- ❑ Growers should understand the restaurant they are trying to sell to (low end, high end, etc...) Price point will be different for each restaurant.

Dave

- ❑ Last year was his first year in business
- ❑ He supplies The Church (Stratford) and Westover Inn
- ❑ It helped to meet with the Chefs and eat at their restaurants to gain a deeper understanding of how the product was going to be used.
- ❑ You can offer to tailor growing to a particular Chef's needs (i.e. plant the seeds they want).
- ❑ It is important to create personal relationships and get to know your customers.
- ❑ Producers need to take a lot of care in quality control. Chefs will be looking for good quality for their money. Producers should constantly inspect their product and be as consistent as possible.

Neil

- ❑ Tries to showcase local food as much as possible
- ❑ Chefs try to be flexible. If a grower/ producer can't supply something, they use something else.
- ❑ The best way to sell your product is to show up at the door with your product. Let the Chef see it and sample it.
- ❑ Small producers need to create a niche market. Don't try to sell what everyone else is selling.
- ❑ Small producers should make sure that there is interest in their product before they start growing it.
- ❑ It is important to be honest with each other. If you can't supply something, don't promise it.